European Journal of Social Psychology, Vol. 27, 603–609 (1997)

Short Note

Strength of identification and intergroup differentiation: the influence of group norms

JOLANDA JETTEN, RUSSELL SPEARS

and

ANTONY S. R. MANSTEAD
Department of Social Psychology, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Abstract

*The present study aimed at showing that the relationship between identification and ingroup bias is moderated by salient group norms that prescribe or proscribe differentiation in an intergroup context. A study (*N = *191) in which level of identification and group norms were manipulated showed that high identifiers acted more in accordance with a salient differentiation norm compared to low identifiers. When a fairness norm was made salient, however, the expected difference was not obtained. The results are discussed in the context of the inconsistent relationships between ingroup bias and identification found in previous research.* ©1997 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Eur. J. Soc. Psychol. 27: 603–609 (1997)
No. of Figures: 0 No. of Tables: 1 No. of References: 14

INTRODUCTION

The present research examines the role of group norms in an attempt to account for the inconsistent relations that have been observed in past research between level of

Addressee for correspondence: Jolanda Jetten, Department of Social Psychology, University of Amsterdam, Roetersstraat 15, 1018 WB Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Tel: +31-20-5256714; Fax: +31-20-6391896; E-mail. sp_Jetten@macmail.psy.uva.nl.

This research was supported by a University of Amsterdam research grant awarded to the second author. We would like to thank Bertjan Doosje, Eddy Van Avermaet and three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

CCC 0046–2772/97/050603–07$17.50

Received 20 February 1996
Accepted 22 August 1996

identification and intergroup differentiation (Hinkle & Brown, 1990). It is argued that group norms that prescribe or proscribe differentiation can express important aspects of a group's identity and these group norms will particularly influence high identifiers' willingness to display ingroup bias.

From social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) it is predicted that group members seek to establish a positive identity by favouring their own group over the outgroup in their reward allocations. Dependent on the importance of group membership for the self-concept, group members differ in level of identification with the group. It is predicted that, compared to low identifiers, high identifiers in particular will search for a positive identity by means of increased ingroup bias. However, in previous research, the hypothesized positive relationship between strength of identification and level of intergroup differentiation has not received consistent support. In real-life intergroup situations, strength of identification was a good predictor of intergroup differentiation in a political context (Kelly, 1988). However, several studies in an occupational setting revealed no relationship, or even a negative relationship between identification and ingroup bias (Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade, & Williams, 1986; Brown & Williams, 1984; Oaker & Brown, 1986). Results of laboratory studies have also been inconsistent (see Hinkle & Brown (1990) for a review). Hinkle and Brown (1990) conclude that these findings raise important problems about the central assumptions of social identity theory.

However, simply searching for a positive correlation between identification and intergroup differentiation probably does not capture the complexity of the relationship between these two constructs. For instance, it has been shown in a number of studies that differences between high and low identifiers are only observed when identity is threatened (e.g. Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, in press). Furthermore, studies show that other factors such as the cohesiveness of a group (Dion, 1973), or the prototypicality of group members (Noel, Wann, & Branscombe, 1995), can moderate the strength of the relationship between ingroup bias and identification.

Another reason for the inconsistent relationship between identification and ingroup bias might be that in different intergroup settings specific group norms are salient that influence the willingness to display ingroup bias. Thus Kelly (1988) explained the difference between her own results and those reported by Brown *et al.* (1986) by assuming that occupational settings are more cooperative in nature, while political settings are by nature more competitive and thereby allow for greater expression of ingroup bias. The aim of the present research is to demonstrate that level of ingroup bias can be moderated by salient group norms that prescribe or proscribe ingroup bias. Group norms can express important aspects of an identity and group members should be motivated to act in accordance with these group norms (Turner, 1991). Since high identifiers should be more concerned than low identifiers with maintaining or achieving a positive identity, we predict that salient group norms will particularly influence high identifiers' willingness to conform.

Fairness and differentiation are the two norms manipulated in this experiment Group identification is manipulated by making positive or negative aspects of the group membership temporarily salient by means of the linguistic framing of items (Salancik, 1974). We predict that participants who identify more highly with the ingroup, as a result of the salience of positive aspects of the group membership, should act more in accordance with group norms. In other words, high identifiers

should display less ingroup bias if the group norms is fairness and more ingroup bias if the group norm represents differentiation compared to low identifiers. The allocation behaviour of low identifiers should be less influenced by ingroup norms.

METHOD

Participants and Design

The design constituted a 2(ingroup norm: fairness versus differentiation) × 2(level of identification: low versus high) between subjects design. First year students of psychology ($N = 191$) at the University of Amsterdam, participated in this experiment, in partial fulfilment of a course requirement.

Procedure

The questionnaire was administered in a group testing session and was introduced as an investigation into the 'involvement of students in activities and management of the university'. First, participants were asked to respond to a list of six negative and seven positive attributes of their own course of study. They were asked to tick the statements that were applicable to themselves and to leave blank the statements that were not applicable to themselves. The statements in the low and high identification condition differed in the way they were framed. The purpose of this linguistic manipulation was to make positive or negative aspects of the identity salient (Salancik, 1974). *Low identification* was created by giving only *moderately negative* attributes and *extremely positive* attributes. The idea was that most participants would probably endorse almost all negative statements (e.g. 'some courses are different than I expected'), but would probably not tick all extreme positive statements (e.g. 'I read a lot of psychology books in my leisure time'). After completion of this task, it would be clearly visible to them that more negative than positive statements were applicable to themselves. *High identification* was created by giving six *extremely negative* statements and seven *moderately positive* statements.

Hereafter, participants were informed that some research had been done on the involvement of students from different subjects in the activities and management of the university. We then presented participants with false feedback about the results concerning psychology students. *Fairness* was manipulated by stressing that the study had shown that psychology students were not only interested in benefits for themselves, but were also concerned about the well-being of students from other majors (e.g. psychology students are also motivated to protest for other students' benefits). *Differentiation* from the outgroup was manipulated by providing false feedback stating that psychology students were only interested in benefits for themselves and less in the benefits for students of other majors.

Dependent Variables

The ingroup norm manipulation was checked by means of the item 'I get the impression that psychology students in general have an interest in activities of other

studies'. This and also other ratings were made on a 7-point scale ranging from 'not at all' (1) to 'very much' (7). The identification manipulation was checked with the item 'To what extent is it important to you to be a psychology student?' Furthermore, we checked whether participants in the high identification condition ticked more positive than negative attributes and whether participants in the low identification condition ticked more negative than positive attributes. Personal identification was measured by means of four items (e.g. 'I see myself as a unique person').

Ingroup bias was measured by two tasks in which participants were required to allocate resources between ingroup and outgroup. Specifically, they were asked to indicate how to distribute (a) 100 000 Dutch guilders for student facilities and (b) five pages of information in the university newspaper between psychology, physics and economics students. Participants were told that they could allocate units of 10 000 guilders and whole or half pages to each of the three groups.

RESULTS

Manipulation Checks

There was a trend for high identifiers to indicate that it was more important for them to be a psychology student compared to participants in the low identification condition, $F(1,190) = 2.38$, $p < 0.12$. However, when the personal identification scale ($\alpha = 0.87$) was used as a covariate in order to reduce error, this main effect for identification reached significance ($M_{high} = 4.56$ and $M_{low} = 4.04$), $F(1,189) = 3.93$, $p < 0.05$[1]. Furthermore, a 2(ingroup norm: fairness versus differentiation) $\times$ 2 (identification: low versus high) $\times$ 2(ticked statements: positive versus negative) analysis of variance with repeated measures on the last factor revealed an interaction between valence of marked statements and identification: $F(1,189) = 194.82$, $p < 0.001$. While participants in the high identification condition checked significantly more positive statements ($M = 0.70$) than negative statements ($M = 0.18$), participants in the low identification condition checked significantly more negative statements ($M = 0.43$) than positive statements ($M = 0.24$).

An ANOVA on the manipulation check for ingroup norm revealed that participants in the fairness condition believed to a greater extent that psychology students in general are concerned with the activities of other majors ($M = 4.11$), compared to participants in the differentiation condition ($M = 3.61$), $F(1,190) = 7.63$, $p < 0.01$.

[1]Although it is predicted from the interpersonal–intergroup continuum principle, derived from social identity theory, that the more the social identity is salient the lower the salience of personal identification should be (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), there was actually a positive correlation between personal and social identification in the present study ($r = 0.17$). This probably reflects scale use response bias and can be considered as a source of measurement error. Personal identification was therefore used as a covariate to reduce error and to control for individual identification. It should be noted that personal identification did not vary with the manipulated variables.

Table 1. Mean percentage allocated pages of the university magazine to ingroup (psychology) and outgroups (physics and business students)

Allocation	Identification	Ingroup norm	
		Fairness	Differentiation
Ingroup	Low	42.49[ab] (10.27)	40.00[a] (8.17)
	High	41.40[a] (12.78)	46.57[b] (14.28)
Outgroup (physics)	Low	28.41 (11.07)	28.70 (8.06)
	High	28.08 (10.05)	28.09 (11.49)
Outgroup (business)	Low	28.61[ab] (11.00)	32.39[a] (9.93)
	High	30.28[a] (10.72)	25.70[b] (10.49)

Note. Only cells not sharing the same superscripts within the psychology, physics or business group differ significantly from each other ($p < 0.05$), in an analysis of simple main effects.

Intergroup Differentiation

The percentage of money and number of pages in the university magazine allocated to ingroup and outgroup were submitted to a 2(ingroup norm) $\times$ 2(identification) $\times$ 3(target group) MANOVA, with repeated measures on the last factor. This analysis revealed a marginally significant main effect for ingroup norm, $F(2, 186) = 2.59$, $p < 0.08$. This main effect was qualified by a three-way interaction between ingroup norm, identification and target group, $F(4,184) = 2.38$, $p < 0.05$. Univariate tests showed that this interaction was only significant for the pages allocation task, $F(2,186) = 3.99$, $p < 0.05$. The means are presented in Table 1.

ANOVAs on the mean percentage allocated pages revealed an interaction between ingroup norm and identification for ingroup allocations, $F(1,187) = 5.17$, $p < 0.05$, and for allocations to business students, $F(1,187) = 7.49$, $p < 0.01$, but not for allocations to physics students, $F < 1$. As can be seen in Table 1, when the group norm was differentiation, high identifiers allocated more to the ingroup, $F(1, 187) = 7.34$, $p < 0.01$, and less to the business student outgroup, $F(1,187) = 9.26$, $p < 0.01$, compared to low identifiers. Furthermore, high identifiers allocated more to the ingroup, $F(1,187) = 4.53$, $p < 0.05$, and less to the business student outgroup, $F(1, 187) = 4.32$, $p < 0.05$, when the group norm was differentiation compared to when the group norm was fairness.

Overall, ingroup bias was significant, $F(4,184) = 43.47$, $p < 0.001$. Inspection of each condition revealed that the ingroup allocations significantly exceeded the outgroup allocations in all conditions ($p < 0.001$).

DISCUSSION

In line with the predictions, participants who strongly identified acted more in accordance with the norm representing positive differentiation. No evidence was obtained for conformity to the fairness norm: high identifiers did not display more fairness compared to low identifiers. One explanation for this finding may be, consistent with results of a recent study, that introducing a norm prescribing fairness might conflict with a more general tendency to show ingroup bias as a means of enhancing social identity (Jetten, Spears & Manstead, 1996). For high identifiers, the

processes of being more motivated to act in accordance with group norms and at the same time being more eager to show ingroup bias might have cancelled each other out, leading to similar levels of ingroup bias for high and low identifiers. A similar process will, in our view, operate for low identifiers. Although, compared to high identifiers, low identifiers should be less motivated to display ingroup bias, they should also be less likely to conform to a fairness group norm. Apart from the fact that the content of a fairness norm conflicts with the tendency to display ingroup bias, the fairness norm is different from the differentiation norm in that it is inherently less group-relevant and group-defining.

As described above, effects were only significant when the outgroup consisted of business students. We suspect that this might be caused by the fact that the intergroup relation between psychology and business students is in general more relevant and competitive compared to the relation between psychology and physics students, although we have no evidence relating to this point. Furthermore, although the means of the monetary allocation measure were in the same direction as the means of the page allocation task, the interaction was not significant. We do not have a clear explanation for this non-significant finding on the monetary allocation measure. One possibility is that participants might hesitate more to behave unfairly when such a large amount of money (100 000 Dutch guilders) is involved if this conflicts with the general ingroup image of being reasonable (cf. Mummendey & Otten, 1996). This could explain the reduced absolute level of ingroup bias across conditions on this measure and might also explain the reduced influence of experimentally manipulated group norms.

Another reason for the fact that the predicted effect was only significant for business students and only on one allocation measure might be that the identification and norm manipulations were not very strong in the present study. The questionnaire methodology used here constrained the possibility of employing strong identification and norm manipulations. The effects would probably have been stronger if identification were manipulated in a laboratory setting by means of a bogus pipeline procedure (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995). Future research should be conducted to replicate the present finding in a laboratory setting.

Our finding demonstrates the importance of group norms in regulating ingroup bias. The finding that for high identifiers the level of ingroup bias can vary with the salient group norm is particularly interesting. This shows, in our view, that displaying low levels of ingroup bias might also be consistent with maintaining a positive identity for high identifiers when this is in accordance with a salient group norm. Thus, focusing only on positive correlations between identification and intergroup differentiation might not be the most appropriate way to conceptualize the relation between social identity and identification.

REFERENCES

Brown, R., Condor, S., Mathews, A., Wade, G., & Williams, J. (1986). Explaining intergroup differentiation in an industrial organization. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, **59**, 273–286.

Brown, R., & Williams, J. (1984). Group identification: The same thing to all people? *Human Relations*, **7**, 547–564.

Dion, K. L. (1973). Cohesiveness as a determinant of ingroup–outgroup bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **28**, 163–171.
Doosje, B., Ellemers, N., & Spears, R. (1995). Perceived intragroup variability as a function of group status and identification. *Journal of Experimental and Social Psychology*, **31**, 410–436.
Hinkle, S., & Brown, R. J. (1990). Intergroup comparisons and social identity: Some links and lacunae. In D. Abrams & M. A. Hogg (Eds), *Social identity theory: Constructive and critical advances* (pp. 48–70). New York: Harvester-Wheatsheaf.
Jetten, J., Spears, R., & Manstead, A. S. R. (1996). Intergroup norms and intergroup discrimination: Distinctive self-categorization and social identity effects. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **71**, 1222–1233.
Kelly, C. (1988). Intergroup differentiation in a political context. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, **27**, 319–332.
Mummendey, A., & Otten, S. (1996). The positive–negative asymmetry of social discrimination: A challenge to social identity theory. Paper presented at the 16th International Congress of Psychology, Montreal, Canada, August.
Noel, G. J., Wann, D. L., & Branscombe, N. R. (1995). Peripheral ingroup membership status and public negativity toward outgroups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **68**, 127–137.
Oaker, G., & Brown, R. (1986). Intergroup relations in a hospital setting: A further test of social identity theory. *Human Relations*, **39**, 767–778.
Salancik, J. R. (1974). Inference of one's attitude from behavior recalled under linguistically manipulated cognitive sets. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, **10**, 415–427.
Spears, R., Doosje, B., & Ellemers, N. (in press). Self-stereotyping in the face of threats to group status and distinctiveness: The role of group identification. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.
Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–24). Chicago: Nelson Hall.
Turner, J. C. (1991). *Social influence*. Milton Keynes, England: Open University Press.

